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ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE

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DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ELA, DRL/IRF, DRL/NESCA, AND NSC FOR
WATERS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/30/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KIRF](#) [KDEM](#) [KWMN](#) [KCRM](#) [EG](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH MINISTER OF INTERIOR ON
AYMAN NOUR, RELIGIOUS AND SCHOLARLY FREEDOM, AND ANTI-TIP

REF: A. CAIRO 1427
[1B.](#) CAIRO 1502

CLASSIFIED BY: AMBASSADOR FRANCIS J. RICCIARDONE,
FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

[11.](#) (C) SUMMARY: IN A WIDE-RANGING MAY 29 MEETING WITH
MINISTER OF INTERIOR HABIB EL ADLY, THE AMBASSADOR AGAIN
PUSHED THE GOE TO CHANGE ITS POLICY OF LISTING ONLY THREE
RELIGIONS ON NATIONAL ID CARDS, AND ASKED THAT THE MINISTRY
OF INTERIOR (MOI) ENSURE THE SAFETY OF RECENTLY RELEASED
CONVERT TO CHRISTIANITY BAHAA EL ACCAD. ADLY WAS IMMOVABLE
ON AYMAN NOUR, AND DECLARED THAT THE AMBASSADOR SHOULD "TRY
TO FORGET ABOUT NOUR." HE SUPPORTS PENDING GOVERNMENT
ANTI-TIP MEASURES, AND PROMISED TO LOOK INTO THE REASONS
BEHIND AN INCREASE IN THE GOE'S REFUSALS OF PERMISSION TO
FULBRIGHT SCHOLARS TO WORK IN EGYPT. HE DID NOT RESPOND TO
THE AMBASSADOR ABOUT THE RECENT DETENTIONS OF BLOGGERS. HE
CRITICIZED THE EGYPTIAN POLITICAL OPPOSITION, AND THIS WEEK'S
"FORUM ON DEMOCRACY AND REFORM IN THE ARAB WORLD" IN QATAR.
END SUMMARY.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ISSUES

[12.](#) (C) RECALLING PREVIOUS CONVERSATIONS ON THIS SUBJECT WITH
MOI AND MFA OFFICIALS, AMBASSADOR STRESSED THE FAR-REACHING
POSITIVE IMPACT THAT AN EGYPTIAN LOWER COURT DECISION WOULD
HAVE, IF ALLOWED TO STAND, WHICH WOULD HAVE REMOVED THE
REQUIREMENT TO IDENTIFY ONE'S RELIGION ON THE NATIONAL I.D.
CARD AS ONLY ONE OF THREE OPTIONS (MUSLIM, CHRISTIAN, JEW).
THE AMBASSADOR STATED THAT OTHER GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES HAVE
TOLD US THAT THE MOI ASSERTS "NATIONAL SECURITY REASONS" FOR
REQUIRING RELIGIOUS IDENTIFICATION AT ALL, AND FOR
RESTRICTING THIS TO ONLY THREE RELIGIONS. HE FURTHER NOTED
THAT THE CURRENT LAW HARSHLY IMPACTS THE LIVES OF BAHAA'IS IN
EGYPT, AND ALSO CONTRAVENES THE EGYPTIAN CONSTITUTION, WHICH
ALLOWS FREEDOM OF RELIGION. ADLY REPLIED THAT THE MOI'S
APPEAL WAS AN AUTOMATIC BUREAUCRATIC MEASURE UNDERTAKEN NOT
BY THE MOI, BUT RATHER BY THE COUNCIL OF STATE ADVOCACY. ONE
OF THE ADVOCATES ON THAT PANEL, WHO HOLDS RESPONSIBILITY FOR
MOI MATTERS BUT WHO DOES NOT REPRESENT THE MOI, IS REQUIRED
TO AUTOMATICALLY CONTEST ANY RULING AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT.
HE OPINED THAT THIS IS A "LEGAL MATTER - IF A RULING IS
RATIFIED BY THE HIGH ADMINISTRATIVE COURT, WE MUST IMPLEMENT
IT." AFTER THE AMBASSADOR CONTINUED PRESSING HIM ON THE
ISSUE, ADLY averred that, should a high court rule that the
national id card policy should change, the MOI would have no
"NATIONAL SECURITY" OR OTHER REASON TO OPPOSE IT, AND COULD
IMPLEMENT SUCH A CHANGE. ANSWERING THE AMBASSADOR'S QUERY AS
TO THE APPROPRIATE GOE OFFICIAL FOR THE USG TO NEXT APPROACH
ON THE ISSUE, THE MINISTER ADVISED THAT WE RAISE IT WITH THE

MINISTER OF JUSTICE. ADLY WARNED THAT WE SHOULD NOT RAISE THIS WITH THE CONCERNED OFFICIAL OF THE COUNCIL OF STATE ADVOCACY, LEST THIS CONSTITUTE ILLEGAL TAMPERING WITH A JUDICIAL PROCESS. (NOTE: WE HAVE RAISED THIS ISSUE DISCREETLY WITH TWO SUCCESSIVE PUBLIC PROSECUTORS AND SENIOR JUDGES, AND WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO. END NOTE).

13. (C) THE AMBASSADOR RAISED THE CASE OF BAHAA EL ACCAD (PER REF A, A MUSLIM-BORN CONVERT TO CHRISTIANITY WHO WAS RECENTLY RELEASED AFTER SPENDING TWO YEARS IN DETENTION WITHOUT CHARGE OR TRIAL), NOTING THAT HIS RELEASE WAS A POSITIVE STEP. HE REPORTED THAT NONETHELESS, ACCAD FEELS UNDER DAILY THREAT AND FEARS FOR HIS PERSONAL SECURITY, NOT ONLY FROM HIS NEIGHBORS BUT ALSO FROM THE STATE ITSELF. THE AMBASSADOR URGED ADLY TO TAKE ANY APPROPRIATE MEASURES TO ENSURE ACCADS SAFETY. ADLY WAS DISMISSIVE OF ACCADS CONCERNS, OPINING THAT HE IS "IMAGINING THINGS," AND "WHAT HE REALLY WANTS IS ASYLUM IN THE U.S. OR CANADA." ADLY STATED THAT ACCAD'S "FEAR OF HIS NEIGHBORS IS BELIEVABLE, BUT HIS FEAR OF THE STATE IS NOT BELIEVABLE. IF EXTREMISTS START TO AGITATE ABOUT HIM, THEN WE WILL GET INVOLVED, BUT RIGHT NOW, WE DO NOT FOLLOW HIS CASE IN THE MOI."

"WHO IS AYMAN NOUR?!"

14. (C) HIGHLIGHTING AYMAN NOUR'S POOR HEALTH, THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF HIS CONTINUED DETENTION ON EGYPTIAN-US RELATIONS AS WELL AS ON PERCEPTIONS OF EGYPT WORLDWIDE, THE AMBASSADOR URGED THE MINISTER TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF NOURS MEDICAL CASE AS A NON-POLITICAL, HUMANITARIAN PRETEXT TO RELEASE AYMAN NOUR ON JUNE 12, WHEN THE JUDICIAL STATE COUNCIL NEXT HOLDS A HEARING ON THE CASE (REF B). ADLY ERUPTED INTO A 10-MINUTE SOLILOQUY ON NOUR, CHARGING THAT THE FOCUS ON NOUR'S CASE AS AYMAN NOUR, RELIGIOUS AND SCHOLARLY FREEDOM, AND ANTI-TIP

A POLITICAL ISSUE IS "NOT FAIR." "WHO IS AYMAN NOUR, THIS CRIMINAL WHO BUILT A PARTY ON A BASE OF FORGERIES, AND THOUGHT HE COULD DEFEAT HOSNI MUBARAK," HE FULMINATED, ADDING THAT "MUBARAK HAS BEEN A LONG-TIME FRIEND OF THE U.S. THROUGH DIFFICULT TIMES, AND NOW YOUR GOVERNMENT CRITICIZES HIM BECAUSE OF AN ISSUE LIKE AYMAN NOUR?!" ADLY ADVISED THAT IT IS "IMPOSSIBLE" THAT NOUR WILL BE RELEASED, "FOR ONE SIMPLE REASON ... WHY NOUR? WE HAVE MANY PRISONERS IN DETENTION, WHOSE CRIMES WERE LESS THAN NOURS. WE CANT RELEASE NOUR, AND LEAVE THEM IN PRISON."

15. (C) THE AMBASSADOR RESPONDED THAT NOUR AND HIS FAMILY HAVE SUFFERED THROUGHOUT HIS DETENTION, AND THAT EVEN IF RELEASED, NOUR IS RUINED PROFESSIONALLY AND WILL NOT BE ABLE TO RE-ENTER POLITICS FOR YEARS, ACCORDING TO EGYPTIAN LAW. STATING THAT NOUR'S CASE "REPRESENTS OPPRESSION IN EGYPT AND DAMAGES EGYPT'S REPUTATION IN THE WORLD," THE AMBASSADOR SAID THAT IT WOULD BE IN THE GOE'S INTEREST TO RELEASE NOUR, AND THAT PERHAPS NOUR MIGHT SUBSEQUENTLY AGREE TO TAKE A FEW YEARS SABBATICAL IN THE U.S. OR EUROPE. ASSERTING THAT THE DECISION WILL BE UP TO THE PRESIDING JUDGES, AS "THE STATE CANNOT TELL THE JUDGE TO RELEASE NOUR," ADLY ADVISED, "TRY TO FORGET ABOUT NOUR."

TIP LEGISLATION, FULBRIGHT SCHOLARS, BLOGGERS
AND NEW EMBASSY ADVISORS

16. (C) THE AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT, WHILE EGYPT IS CURRENTLY WORKING TO STRENGTHEN LEGISLATION TO COMBAT THE TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN, SIMILAR LEGAL EFFORTS TO FIGHT THE TRAFFICKING OF PERSONS OVERALL ARE NOT PROGRESSING. TRAFFICKING OF ADULTS, PARTICULARLY FOR PURPOSES OF PROSTITUTION, WAS ALSO A PRIORITY TARGET OF OUR GLOBAL CAMPAIGN, AS WELL AS MRS. MUBARAK'S. ADLY ASSURED HIM THAT ANTI-TIP REVISIONS TO THE CHILDREN'S LAW ARE "BEING STUDIED AT THE MINISTERIAL LEVEL," AND THAT "MRS. MUBARAK IS INDEED WORKING NOT ONLY FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN, BUT ALSO FOR WOMEN." ADLY AVERRED THAT THE EGYPTIAN POLICE ARE WORKING TO COMBAT TIP, BUT AGREED THAT "POLICE WORK ALONE IS NOT ENOUGH." HE COMMENTED

THAT A PENDING PRIME MINISTERIAL DECREE THAT WILL CREATE AN INTER-AGENCY COMMITTEE TO COORDINATE ANTI-TIP EFFORTS IS "CURRENTLY UNDER REVIEW BY THE COMPONENT MINISTRIES."

¶ 17. (C) LAUDING THE BENEFITS OF THE FULBRIGHT PROGRAM TO EGYPTIAN-AMERICAN ACADEMIC AND CULTURAL EXCHANGES, THE AMBASSADOR ADVISED ADLY OF AN INCREASE OVER THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS IN THE GOES REFUSAL RATE OF FULBRIGHT SCHOLARS, NOTING THAT THE GOE DENIED PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN EGYPT TO AN ESTIMATED 23% OF THE 2007-08 ASPIRING U.S. GRANTEES. HE REQUESTED TWO MEASURES: FIRST, MORE ACCEPTANCE OF WHAT WERE OTHERWISE ORDINARY TOPICS OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL RESEARCH IN EGYPT AND THE REGION; SECOND, IF THE GOE OBJECTED TO SOME AMERICAN SCHOLARS STUDYING TOPICS PERCEIVED TO BE SO SENSITIVE AS TO THREATEN STATE SECURITY, THAT THE MOI ADVISE THE EMBASSY AS EARLY IN THE PROCESS AS POSSIBLE, SO THE SCHOLARS COULD UNDERTAKE THEIR RESEARCH IN ANOTHER COUNTRY. THE AMBASSADOR FLAGGED THAT THE REGRETTABLE RESULT OF THE PROBLEMS THE FULBRIGHT PROGRAM IS HAVING IS THAT U.S. SCHOLARS ARE DISCOURAGED FROM STUDYING IN EGYPT, AND ARE GOING ELSEWHERE IN THE ARAB WORLD. ADLY SEEMED GENUINELY SURPRISED, STATING THAT, "THERE IS NOTHING NEW IN AMERICANS STUDYING 'SENSITIVE TOPICS' IN EGYPT - THEY STUDY THAT AND MORE AT THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO!" HE NOTED THE ONLY POTENTIALLY SENSITIVE RESEARCH TOPIC IS RELIGION, "WHICH MIGHT RAISE COMPLICATIONS WITH AL AZHAR." ADLY ASKED THAT THE EMBASSY PROVIDE FURTHER DETAILS ON THE DELAYS TO AN MOI POINT OF CONTACT HE PROMISED TO DESIGNATE, SO THAT "WE CAN STUDY WHAT THE PROBLEM IS."

¶ 18. (C) COMPLIMENTING ADLY ON THE PROGRESS IN FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN EGYPT OVER THE PAST YEARS, THE AMBASSADOR CITED U.S. AND WORLDWIDE CONCERN AT THE RECENT DETENTIONS OF BLOGGERS. NOTING THAT, "THE PUNISHMENT SHOULD SUIT THE CRIME," THE AMBASSADOR SAID THAT WHEN BLOGGERS ARE SENTENCED TO 4 YEARS IN PRISON FOR CRITICIZING RELIGION AND THE PRESIDENT, "IT LOOKS EXCESSIVE TO THE WORLD." HE REPORTED TO ADLY THAT CONGRESSWOMAN MOORE HAD RAISED THIS ISSUE WITH MUBARAK THE PREVIOUS DAY. ADLY DID NOT RESPOND DIRECTLY TO THIS POINT, OTHER THAN TO NOTE THAT, "THE FULL TRUTH ABOUT OUR COUNTRY MUST REACH THE WORLD, SO THAT AN INCORRECT PICTURE OF EGYPT IS NOT PUT FORWARD."

¶ 19. (C) THE AMBASSADOR INTRODUCED THE EMBASSY'S NEW JUSTICE ATTACH AS A RESOURCE FOR U.S.-EGYPTIAN CONSULTATIONS IN ALL AREAS OF THE RULE OF LAW, FROM LEGISLATION TO IMPLEMENTATION. HE ALSO ADVISED ADLY OF THE ARRIVAL OF EMBASSY'S NEW SENIOR AYMAN NOUR, RELIGIOUS AND SCHOLARLY FREEDOM, AND ANTI-TIP

LAW ENFORCEMENT ADVISOR; THE MINISTER WELCOMED HIS PLANS TO TRAIN AND WORK WITH THE EGYPTIAN POLICE.

THOUGHTS ON POLITICAL OPPOSITION

¶ 10. (C) PROMPTED BY AN INCOMING CALL REGARDING A RULING ON THE CASE OF OPPOSITION MP ESMAT ANWAR SADAT (SEPTEL), ADLY MUSED THAT "THE OPPOSITION IN EGYPT DOES NOT CONSIST OF MORE THAN 50 PEOPLE." HE NOTED THAT, "REGRETTABLY, SOME OF THESE OPPOSITIONISTS ARE TOUTING AN UNFAIR AND INCORRECT IMAGE OF EGYPT, LIKE THOSE WHO ARE TRYING TO AGITATE EGYPTIAN WORKERS TO STRIKE." ADLY PROFESSED NOT TO UNDERSTAND WHY EGYPTIANS WERE PARTICIPATING IN THIS WEEK'S "FORUM ON DEMOCRACY AND REFORM IN THE ARAB WORLD" IN QATAR, AND ASSERTED THAT AN EGYPTIAN OPPOSITIONIST HAD TOLD HIM HE WOULD NOT ATTEND, BECAUSE HE DID NOT WANT TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH THE OTHER CONFERENCE ATTENDEES, AND THAT, "THIS EVENT WILL NOT ACHIEVE ANYTHING."

RICCIARDONE